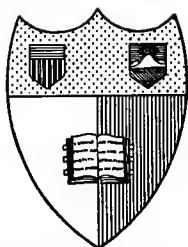


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ILLE EGO

VIRGIL AND PROFESSOR RICHMOND

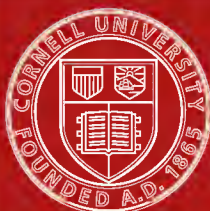
By

J. S. PHILLIMORE

Uerum ubi nulla mouet stabilem fallacia Nisum—Cirīs

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ILLE EGO

Virgil and Professor Richmond

ILLE EGO

Virgil and Professor Richmond

IN his inaugural address¹ to the Humanity Class at Edinburgh, Prof. Richmond refers to 'a recent attempt to drag in the *ego* of Virgil into the very first words of his final work, an attempt the frustration of which will suggest to us some considerations illustrative of the science of Humanity, and provide a brief example of the method'.

A wary reader will immediately be on the alert when he sees this. The words '*method*' and '*science of Humanity*' are danger signals. We know what sins are committed against reason in their name. παραπλήσιον γὰρ φαίνεται μαθηματικοῦ τε πιθανολογούντος ἀποδέχεσθαι καὶ ῥητορικὸν ἀποδείξεις ἀπαιτεῖν. And when an inquiry proposed as an example of method concerns itself with a matter so intrinsically interesting as the exordium of the Aeneid, Mr. Richmond's arguments deserve a close scrutiny.

The editor of Virgil for the O. C. T. series restores the lines

*'ille ego, qui quondam gracili modulatus auena
carmen, et egressus silvis uicina coegi
ut quamuis auido parerent arua colono,
gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis'*—

to the position which Nisus was in the habit of saying they had occupied before Varius' recension. This is what Mr. R. calls 'an attempt to drag in the *ego* of Virgil'; he has

¹ *Classics and the Scientific Mind*. Edinburgh, James Thin, Publisher to the University, 1919.

satisfied himself that he has 'frustrated' this attempt in five pages, and thereby provided a brief example of method. The claim to brevity may be allowed. Henry, on whom Mr. Richmond passes sentence that he was '*of brilliant but imperfectly balanced judgement*', devoted no less than 118 pages to the vindication of these verses. If there is one quality which distinguished Henry, it was his stickling for proofs dialectically tested and a decisive weight of evidence: it is a superficial estimate which confuses whimsical excursions of personality with ill-balanced judgement. Deep in Virgil, as hardly another modern has ever been, Henry was a cautious critic. Re-read his rigorous and massive reasoning, and you will be tempted to say in haste that the 'method' which Mr. R.'s pages briefly exemplify is the gay process of *ignoratio elenchi*. But then there is a sentence of his on p. 24 which might give colour to the conclusion that his method is pure paradox, and his object to make fools of his audience.

'*First words to the ancient mind, far more than to ours, were words of omen, and in a sense signature.*' But it is just the words of signature which Mr. R. is athetizing! What is left of a signature when you suppress all indication of authorship? The rest is irrelevance: for what has the question of omen or non-omen to do with the authenticity of the quatrain? There was nothing ill-omened in alluding to yourself in an exordium. Ovid, *Amores*, ii. 1 proves that—

'hoc quoque composui Paelignis natus aquosis,
ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae.'

So does the author of *Ciris*. I know no reason why what was well-omened for a short poem should not also be well-omened for a long (and even a final) poem.

What, then, remains of the 'omen' and 'signature' argument?

Next, but still among preliminary considerations, I must quote more from p. 24:

The traditional first words of the Aeneid, *Arma uirumque*, are familiar friends even to the least classical memory; they are constantly quoted by ancient writers to indicate by allusion the poem itself whose subject they epitomize; and they have the further claim to this position that they combine in one phrase allusion to the first words of both Iliad and Odyssey, *μῆνιν*, the wrath of Achilles, and *ἄνδρα*, the wanderer Odysseus.

(By what method can *arma* be made into an allusion to *μῆνιν*? It has been a commonplace of Virgilian criticism for fifteen hundred years that, in so far as the Aeneid is an epic of battle, the poet utilizes the Iliad; and *arma* probably¹ means 'battle'; but what is there in the battle-books of the Aeneid at all answerable to the sulking of Achilles?) But, to continue:

The Aeneid is an Odyssey for six books to which an Iliad in six books succeeds. Ask a schoolboy the first words of the Aeneid and he will know them; but turn to the Oxford text of Virgil, sent out from that great authoritative press since the year 1900 to be a Latin bible for schools and universities, and you will find a different state of affairs. *Arma uirumque* has become the fifth verse and lost all significance.

I hold no brief for the Clarendon Press: they may have been hideously mistaken in committing their edition of Virgil to Sir Arthur Hirtzel rather than to a schoolboy: if they imagined that they were issuing Virgil 'as a Latin bible', they would not strain at lesser blunders. But this

¹ Probably: though opinion has been much divided. I give Mr. R. the benefit of the doubt, for if *arma* = ἄρμα the disparity with *μῆνιν* is even more glaring.

appeal to the schoolboy is suspiciously like the method of Macaulay, the bluster of prejudice, and the voices of a minority silenced by brass and wind. It is our old friend '*We-always-thought*'. Test it by analogy: ask a schoolboy (if schoolboys still read the Elegy) with what lines Gray introduces the Epitaph, and he will know them:

'Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

But an editor of the Elegy (whether or not as part of an English bible) will be bound to show, by whatever typographical means he may choose, that Gray originally had another stanza after that:

'There scatter'd oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen, are show'rs of violets found;
The redbreast loves to build and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground.'

Ask a schoolboy (if schoolboys read Wordsworth) the first words of *Dion*, and he will know them:

'Serene, and fitted to embrace,
Where'er he turned, a swanlike grace,'
&c.

But it is an editor's business to record—

'Fair is the swan, whose majesty, prevailing
O'er breezeless water on Locarno's lake,'
&c.

although these lines were afterwards proscribed. Whether these two poets were well or ill advised in their after-thoughts, is another question; I am merely showing by modern instances that editors neglect their office if they accept for standard that last dilution of literature, the

school-book. And here it will not be out of place to quote from an admirable palinode of resipiscence by Dr. Vollmer (*quod minime reris*) of Munich: ¹

Aber wir müssen noch die Frage aufwerfen: wie ist es gekommen und möglich gewesen, dass die Meinung, die ganze oder fast die ganze Appendix Vergiliana sei unecht, sich bilden und behaupten konnte? Wir können, das ist die Lösung, hier einmal den verhängnisvollen Einfluss der Schule auf die literarische Tradition mit Händen greifen. Untergegangen ist die ganze gelehrte Literatur, die sich an Vergil's Namen und Werke anschloss, von Hyginus und Asconius bis zur Vita Suetoni; was sich erhalten hat, sind die *spärlichen entstellten und verwässerten Reste all dieser Arbeit, aufgenommen in und verarbeitet für eine Reihe von erklärenden Schulausgaben.*

Et Saul inter prophetas. Dr. Vollmer's contention concerns primarily the Minor Works; but it is also true that in every respect the body of Virgilian lore has been dissected and reduced to suit the measure of Mr. R.'s arbiter, the schoolboy. And the fact stated is incontestable, for the names of the critics who wrote on Virgil have been recorded; and of this mass of writing no more than a meagre fraction has been preserved in Aulus Gellius, Macrobius, Servius, Donatus: so that Mr. R. is under an (p. 26) extraordinary delusion when he says

The story, like the verses, is feeble; but the later commentators rescued both, for the reason *that every scrap of Virgil legend, true or false, interested them.*

If so, they dissembled or controlled their interest marvellously well: of Caecilius Epirota, Virgil's contemporary, they have rescued nothing; of Hyginus,

¹ *Die kleineren Gedichte Vergils*, Munich, 1907, p. 372.

Modestus, Cornutus, Asper, Probus, a few dozen lines altogether. Every scrap of Virgil legend! It is to be hoped that the reformed Edinburgh School of Humanity will not disdain, amongst more recondite fields of inquiry, to research into Ribbeck's *Prolegomena*, or Nettleship's *Introductions*—or even Teuffel-Schwabe's *History of Latin Literature*. If by 'legend' is implied fable, even the interpolated codices of Donatus contain but very few scraps of such; and, almost without exception, the added stories bear a plainly mediaeval character. (See the interpolations in Σ as exhibited in Brummer's app. crit.)

Besides the school-book, there is, in this case, another very important factor to remember: officialism. Virgil was a Government author; Varius and Tucca edited his works under direct imperial commission. Their edition was the official text, the Authorized Version. Now we know from our own literary history what prestige can be given to a book by Government *imprimatur*. There are many persons to whom the Douai-Rheims version of the Scriptures is hardly now known; they would be hurt if you suggested that they were illiterate. But it is only lately that any one can whisper a word against the Jacobean Version without risking penalties. We have our 'official' truth; our 'official' view of history; our 'official' lives of public persons,—it may be a poet, as Wordsworth, or a sovereign, as Victoria. It is the business of Officialdom to see that nothing escapes, and anecdotes have hard work to slip through the cordon; even harmless anecdotes, for a solemnity gathers round great names. The genius of officialdom is suspicious even of curiosity: a casual tourist becomes a Guy Faux if he is found prying about Westminster. And the early Principate had many exposed

nerves. Of officialism in the Virgil tradition we have one clinching example: the fate of the *laudes Galli* in Georg. Bk. iv. No sane critic, one might say, no critic not congenitally disqualified for estimating a point of common human psychology, can imagine that the fact reported by Servius was fiction. (Caecilius Epirota's direct witness on this particular point would have been priceless.) Yet not a line, not a syllable of the passage has been allowed to survive. And so it was with all the Opera Minora. Survive they did, but only to slink about as poor relations. The schoolboy knew them not. Hence the weakness of their manuscript tradition.

So the authenticity of our four verses is no more disproved by the Authorized Version suppressing them than is the existence of the *laudes Galli*. All our manuscripts of Virgil represent the controlled tradition, the Palatine text; officially sacred, like the 'Annexed Book'; true 'in a Parliamentary sense', like the answers of Ministers in the House of Commons. But it would be very simple-minded to take it for the whole truth.

The 'greater scholars' whom Mr. R. alleges to have tacitly repudiated the lines were only publishers and booksellers. An argument from the silence of *lost* authors is surely rather a tall order. If Donatus, Servius, Priscian, &c., either give the story about Nisus or quote the four lines without reservation, to them an argument from silence does apply: if they mention no refutation of Nisus, then

'tacent; satis laudant'

Preliminaries thus cleared, we can proceed to pose the main question for discussion.

Somebody wrote these four verses. Who? Virgil or

another? If another, who was the forger and what was his motive?

Mr. R. replies (p. 28):

The author of this exercise I conceive to have been Nisus himself, the schoolmaster, whose legend is our only ancient source for the verses, and whose word would be of no value for any compositions but his own.

The reasoning of the last sentence is dark to me, I confess; but let that pass. We have Mr. R. admitting that he can suggest no other author for the verses than Nisus. The issue is simplified. What then was the man's motive?

It is easy enough to conjecture the occasion for the spurious lines. The fourth book of the Georgics does end with a modest autobiographical note, a mere subscription in verse, by which the poet claims as his own the first, second, and third books preceding and also his earlier bucolic Eclogues, whose first verse he here quotes in his last. In a complete edition of Virgil, *such as would not appear till long after the separate publication of the Aeneid*, this subscription would fall immediately before the first verse of the Aeneid, and might suggest, either to an editor or a student, an exercise in imitation, which should purport to link up the Aeneid also with the rounded whole of the rest.

One can hardly restrain a smile, to see Mr. R. so anxiously limiting the significance of

‘illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat
Parthenope’

to suit his contention that it was not in character with Virgil's known modesty to write a personal *envoi* to the Aeneid. Therefore it is carefully explained to us that an *envoi* at the beginning and an *envoi* at the end of a poem are quite quite different things; and will we please be good children and not too inquisitive?

But one must be inquisitive about what is professed as an example of method, and I must beg leave to ask :
(1) What is there less 'modestly autobiographical' in the *ille ego* lines than in those words of signature

'*illo Vergilium me tempore*'?

(2) What grounds are there for saying that a complete edition of Virgil only appeared 'long after' 19 B.C.?

(3) Why should the need, or the convenience, of an *envoi* for the Aeneid strike a reader who possessed a one-volume Virgil more forcibly than a reader who had him in the *format* of a collection of single rolls?

(4) If it is 'easy to conjecture' that the *envoi* subscriptio to *Georg.* iv suggested to Nisus an *envoi* prologue to *Aeneid* i, does not that imply an obvious *a priori* fitness? Why should it not have suggested itself to Virgil?

One is reminded that the nineteenth century produced a race of human beings who believed that the *Culex* was 'written up' to the Gnat's Epitaph, which alone was allowed to be Virgilian.

So far, then, we are nothing advanced towards a solution of the problem, as defined for trial. But now comes Mr. R.'s main argument against Virgil's and for Nisus' authorship. It may be reduced under four heads :

1. The literary merit of the verses.
2. Their Latinity.
3. The worth of Nisus as an authority.
4. The evidence of Propertius.

1. Mr. R. finds the four verses less than neat, Sir A. Hirtzel dubbed them *praeclarissimos*. The matter is hardly worth discussion. *Culex* may contain much that is unworthy of Virgil, and yet be his work. The opinion of

us modern grammatici on a point of taste will decide nothing, and the opinion of great poets is divided. Dryden, indeed, denounced them; but if Spenser and Milton imitated them, the verses cannot have seemed trashy to Spenser and Milton. However, as proof or disproof cannot turn merely on a point of taste, we may leave it at that.

2. This is the very core of the debate. Here it is not a matter of likes and dislikes but a question capable of strict proof. If nothing *un-Augustan* can be found in the verses, then the attack on Nisus' statement plainly loses force. Pope may write unlike himself, on occasion, but he does not write like Tennyson. Here, then, Mr. R.'s statement must be closely sifted, line by line.

(a) It will at once be seen that the word *Martis* adds nothing to *arma* except a slight incongruity; for the 'arms' of the 'man' himself were not so much of Mars as of Vulcan.

If *arma Martis* is tautology, we must athetize Eclogue x. 44:

'nunc insanus amor duri me *Martis in armis*'?

For the rest I need not recapitulate Henry's argument for taking *arma* as *warfare*. But can the opening of the Authorized Version be so vastly superior if the first word of it is equivocal? I suppose nobody will hesitate what

'*horrentia Martis arma*'

means, or fail to recognize the contrast of this theme with those of *Bucolics* and *Georgics*. But should anybody insist on taking *arma* as ὅπλα, still the word *Martis* is not amiss: for husbandmen have their *arma* too. *Operisque relinquunt arma sui* (Ov. *Met.* xi. 35).

(b) 'But *horrentia* is conventional.' Of course it is:

most of the epithets in Virgil are. Such is the way of Classicism.

Rocks are hard, skies are blue, water is liquid, wars are cruel :

‘bella, horrida bella’ (*Aen.* vi. 86).

‘Merely’ conventional, may be questioned : for in contrast with the ‘slender oat’ and the Underwoods of Pastoral, the humble, homely, local utilities of Points of Husbandry, would it not be rather unsymmetrical if the new and strange (*at nunc*) subject were not coloured with an epithet, the *horrible fray of Battle*?

(c) Then what is the distinction between the words *colono* (with *arua*) and *agricolis*, both of which are derived from the root of *colere*, to cultivate? If there is no distinction, we have mere pleonasm.

Mr. R.’s blows are meant for Nisus, but they fall on Virgil. What about this?

‘hiems ignaua *colono* :

frigoribus parto agricolae plerumque fruuntur.’

(*Georg.* i. 299.)

Anybody who cultivates the earth is *agricola* ; but in the north of Italy, and especially for the generation after Philippi, the most conspicuous among the landed population were the *coloni*. The words are not truly synonymous : a rustic god is *agricola deus* (*Tibull.* i. 1. 14); but you could not say *deus colonus*.¹ The *colonus* is the new man, the dispossessor, the planter on a confiscated farm ; he is a harnisworthy hustler who means to get rich quick, and has a notion of exploiting the land pitilessly (*ante Iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni*—*Georg.* i. 125) : he is

¹ Though an ox can be called *ruricola* and *colonus* (*Ov. Met.* xv. 124, 142). But the audacity of the metaphor is in itself a piece of Pythagorean pleading.

sturdily ambitious (*hinc laudem fortes sperate coloni*—Georg. iii. 288). But the Georgics find favour with anybody who lives on the land (*gratum opus agricolis*).

(d) How can the poet who incites the husbandman to 'constrain the soil' to his will, properly be said to 'constrain the soil' himself for the husbandman's use? This is possibly Silver Latin, but not an earlier style.

The bungling forger betrayed by an anachronism! In fact, just what might have been expected of Nisus, the Schoolmaster. Nowhere are Mr. R.'s frustrations more unfortunate than here. Of that common figure by which a poet is said to do himself what he makes his persons do, Henry (p. 108) happens to quote only an example from Martial; and it is commoner in Statius than others.¹ These are Silver Authors, but did Horace² write Silver Latin?

'*Turgidus Alpinus iugulat dum Memnona.*'

(*Sat.* i. 10. 36.)

Furius described, not performed, the killing of Memnon, &c. Is the Sixth Eclogue Silver Latin?

'*Pasiphaen niuei solatur amore iuueni*' (*Ecl.* vi. 46).

Silenus *describes*, not performs, the comforting of Pasiphae, just as in vv. 62, 63

'*Phaethontidas musco circumdat amarae
corticis atque solo proceras erigit alnos*'

he *describes*, not performs, the surrounding and uprearing. Is the *Culex* Silver Latin? It has a curious development of this figure (v. 29). Did the author of the '*Ἐπιτάφιος Βίωνος*' write Silver Latin?

Βίων ἐνόμει

καὶ σύριγγας ἔτευχε καὶ ἀδέα πόρτιν ἄμελγε (81, 82).

¹ A collection of exx. in Gronovius' *Diatrise*, chap. xxii.

² Cf. *Sat.* ii. 5. 41.

(c) Finally, but most important, could Virgil ever have spoken of a 'greedy husbandman' (*quamuis avido colono*)? One chief moral of his writings on husbandry is that the tiller of the soil has the simplest needs and is free from the avarice of the towns; nowhere does he suggest competition for profits. But this view of the countryman might possibly occur to a townbred man of the Silver Age, used to profiteering market gardeners.

One has only to recall Varro's *Res Rusticae* to refute this notion that competition for profits was unknown to the Virgilian race of countrymen, and invented by the degenerate Silver Age. To give a single instance;¹ Varro's two Faliscan soldiers, who averaged 10,000 sesterces per annum for their honey alone and 'could afford to wait for a rise of prices'. *R. R.* iii. 14. 10.

'Could he have spoken of a greedy husbandman?' One does not require any special 'sense of Virgil's economy of language' or 'acquaintance with his personal character' (p. 29) to answer this question: no delicate inferences are needed for a clear case. He did.

'illa seges demum uotis respondet *auari*
agricolae' (Georg. i. 47).

Auarus, I take it, is a harsher word than *avidus*. And if parallel passages go for anything, Ovid echoed

'ut quamuis avido parerent arua colono'

when he wrote

'frugibus immensis avidos satiate colonos'
(*Fasti* i. 677).

I have stuck strictly to the points impugned by Mr. R.;

¹ The passage was made famous by Virgil's famous echo of a phrase in it.

others are abundantly illustrated by Henry. What is left standing of the assertion that the four verses are 'certainly not Virgilian in diction'?

3. Now for Nisus' story. This otherwise unknown Schoolmaster flourished, in Nettleship's opinion, in the age of Tiberius, about half a century after Virgil's death. The grammatici did not deal in higher learning, as a rule, and his word would have weighed little in his own age against the greater scholars who accepted *arma virumque* without demur. Had there been any truth in his story it would have been handed down to us on far better authority. But Nisus only claimed to have it by hearsay from unnamed older men; and evidently did not himself read the verses where the Oxford editor has printed them. He says expressly that Varius, the first editor, corrected the beginning by the removal of these verses. Nor does he categorically assert that the verses removed were by Virgil.

Poor Nisus! An 'elementary schoolmaster' (p. 25), otherwise unknown', and he had the temerity to persist in recording what the older generation told him. But he is not quite unknown, since Velius, Charisius, and Priscian all quote him as an authority on points of usage, grammar, and orthography. '*Nisus eleganter*' says Charisius, citing his opinion on *mella* and *uina*. There was nothing obscure about him to them; since one name explained his identity, nobody troubled to tell us his other ones. He was a scholar, as the word *grammaticus* indicates.

In what sense Mr. R. uses the term 'Higher' learning, I know not. The adjective often conveys a nuance of euphemistical negation. People smile at 'Higher Criticism', 'Higher Thought', 'Higher Christianity', &c., because in these phrases 'Higher' denotes the esoteric pretensions of a self-sufficient coterie. But if Mr. R. means to imply that Nisus was talking of things beyond his beat, then one

must ask him whence he derives his idea of a *grammaticus*. He quite misconceives the competence implied by the term. It is surprising that any man who had read Suetonius' *de Grammaticis* could pen the paragraph that I have quoted. Just recall to mind the famous

*Cato grammaticus, Latina Siren,
qui solus legit et facit poetas,*

and imagine anybody telling Cinna and Ticide and Bibaculus that their master was not a dealer in higher learning. However, instead of retailing the list of great Augustan and Tiberian scholars whom Suetonius chronicles as *grammatici*, it will suffice to summon the *grammaticus* or *philologus* described by Seneca in *Epist. Mor.* 108. To him Virgil or Cícero is a text for linguistic, stylistic, historical, or literary commentary; he traces the Ennian or the Homeric influences on a given phrase, &c. This *grammaticus* looks like a real person; he is about contemporary with Nisus. He may have been Nisus himself. Seneca slights him because he does not turn his Virgil into flatulent moralities. But he is evidently adequate for the functions of a school of *hautes études*—if that has anything to do with 'higher learning'. And after all, what was Nisus *ex hypothesi* doing? Not deciding some fine question of scholarship, but merely recording what the last generation had told him. What does he mean by *seniores*? Since he is a scholar, and the academic society of lecturers, librarians, and authors was fully developed under Augustus, we have a right to interpret *priores* as the men of letters of the last generation. And since Nisus (Keil, *G. L.* vii. 45) *floruit* shortly after Verrius Flaccus, who was appointed to a chair at the Palatine as early as 10 B.C.,

we have quite a short and easy reach for oral tradition. To name no others, old Seneca lived on till A.D. 39, bearing in his marvellous memory all the record of Augustan literary history. Nisus may easily have spoken with him. And Mr. R. expects us to believe that the verses were forged in that age!¹

¹ One of Suetonius' remarks has received less attention than it deserves. Reconstructing his statement by the parallel use of Donatus (Brummer, *Vit. Verg.* p. 11. 201) and Philargyrius (ibid. p. 44, 106) we get this:

<i>Donatus.</i>	<i>Philarg. I.</i>
quamuis igitur multa pseudepigrapha, id est falsa inscriptione, sub alieno nomine sint prolata ut Thyestes tragoedia huius pœtæ quam Varius suo nomine edidit, et alia huius modi; tamen bucolica liquido Vergilii esse minime dubitandumst, &c.	quamuis igitur multa alia inscriptione sub aliena sint prolata et Varius sub nomine suo edidit tamen bucolica liquido Vergilii esse minime dubitandum

Now the prevailing colour of modern criticism has been to deny to Virgil anything but the official works. But Suetonius, it seems, so far from supposing that spurious writings were put out under his name, states quite a different thing: that Virgil's work had been freely pirated, naming in particular the *Thyestes* which Varius claimed to have written. Nobody else, says Suetonius, can lay claim to the *Bucolics*; because Virgil explicitly asserts his authorship in

'carmina qui lusi pastorum', &c.

And to Suetonius goes back the catalogue (see Vollmer, op. cit.) which allows *Culex*, *Ciris*, *Dirae*, &c., to be Virgilian, with only a query attached to *Aetna*.

The point deserves fuller consideration than the scope of this paper permits.

The justice of Vollmer's observations (quoted above) once realized, such statements as that 'greater scholars accepted *arma uirumque* without demur' and 'Had there been any truth in the story it would have been handed down to us on far better authority', have the bottom knocked out of them. Who were these greater scholars? And what do we know of their opinion on the matter? If, as is usually allowed, Donatus follows Suetonius what reason is there for excepting this particular detail and presuming it to be un-Suetonian? Does not the very word *aiebat* suggest that it comes from an author within range of oral tradition from Nisus? As Suetonius would be. The story of the *laudes Galli* is reported by Servius, who does not name his authority. The vindication of our four lines is by so much the stronger as it is the more circumstantial. And it is of the very nature of the case that where suppressed verses are in question, school-editions and popular editions will not show them.¹ Because the suppressed stanza from the Elegy is not in the Golden Treasury, are you to suppose that Mason had forged it and reckon Palgrave as disbelieving him? That interesting anecdote, that Virgil once pleaded a suit, comes to us on no higher authority than Donatus alone.² Are we to reject it? No: it is to be accepted because it is agreeable to what we know of Virgil (Sen. *Controv.* iii, *Praef.* 8), because no plausible reason can be assigned for a fiction; and because we presume Suetonius behind Donatus.

Similarly there are no grounds for rejecting a piece of tradition warranted by the word of a scholar who may easily have spoken with many of Virgil's contemporaries.

¹ Cf. another example in Seneca Rhetor, *Suas.* iii. 7.

² Donat. *Vita*, l. 48, ed. Brummer.

No grounds: because the *onus probandi* lies on those who refuse to accept Nisus' statement; and the attempt to show any intrinsic improbability in the four verses, whether of diction or *ethos*, has collapsed under examination.

We may agree with Dryden, or agree with Spenser and Milton in our personal taste; but the merit of the verses is neither here nor there. Varius' editorial judgement may have been right or wrong: by a lucky accident, we are enabled, for once, to go behind it.

4. There remains only the witness of Propertius (which Pierius used to prove the genuineness of the four verses, ap. Henry, p. 13). Because (in ii. 34) Propertius says:

‘qui nunc Aeneae Troiani suscitāt arma
iactaque Lauinis moenia litoribus.’

Mr. R. infers

that he had read the beginning of the Aeneid three years before it passed to Virgil's executors for publication, and it began with the passage we know (p. 28).

The inference cannot be allowed. Propertius is taking a summary view of Virgil's poems from memory.

(a) He touches the Bucolics in these terms (ii. 34. 67, 68):

‘tu canis umbrosi subter pineta Galaesi
Thyrsin et attritis Daphnin arundinibus.’

Well: there is no Galaesus in the Eclogues as we have them. Does it follow that Propertius had a different text?

(b) Then for the Georgics he has:

‘tu canis Ascraei ueteris praecepta poetae,
quo seges in campo, quo uiret uua iugo’.

Does it follow that Books iii and iv were unknown to him? His allusion only bears on i and ii.

(c) Mr. R. infers from *arma* that Propertius alludes to *arma uirumque*. Why is it not equally legitimate to infer that he had in his ear the sound of

‘ipse deos in Dardana *suscitat arma*’ (*Aen.* ii. 618)

(a phrase of almost unexampled rarity) and that

‘iactaque *Lauinis*¹ *moenia litoribus*’

echoes

‘promissa *Lauini*
moenia’ (*Aen.* i. 258).

I do not deny an allusion to *Aen.* i. 2, but I deny that the allusion is limited to that; and there is the warning of

‘*subter pineta Galaesi*’

staring us in the face to forbid us from taking an imaginative recollection for an exact statement. But even allowing (*per impossibile*) that Propertius alludes to

‘*arma uirumque cano*’

and, to that alone, Mr. R.’s conclusion remains, for all that, nothing more nor less than an assumption. For the *envoi* lines might be there all the time, yet since the *envoi* lines do not indicate the matter of the poem, which is what he is concerned to suggest, it would have been absurd to quote them. The opening of *Paradise Regained* illustrates the point aptly enough: suppose a poet wishing to indicate the various Miltonic poems by allusion: of the three first lines of the final epic:

¹ He had no choice but to use the contracted form for *Lauiniis* since the other was impossible for dactylic verse.

‘I who erewhile the happy Garden sung
By one man’s disobedience lost, now sing
Recovered Paradise to all mankind ...’

he must necessarily neglect the first two as inoperative, and his allusion only begin to apply to the third.

And if Propertius’ words are to be so closely pressed, why are we not entitled to gather from his

‘*qui NUNC Aeneae*’

that he was acquainted with

‘*AT NUNC horrentia Martis*

arma’?

I submit, then, that no grounds have been established for supposing that Donatus has not transmitted to us, as usual, what he found in Suetonius; or that Suetonius refused credit to Nisus’ statement; or that Nisus’ statement involves any intrinsic improbability. And it has been shown that none of the objections made by Mr. R. on the score of diction or matter are solidly founded. No human being can *prove* the truth of Nisus’ statement; but if the state of the case has been rightly conceived, since the attempt to *disprove* it fails, the four verses remain in possession. The reader must judge how the method, of which that attempt was proclaimed an example, stands examination.

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